

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SR-02 ORM-01 ITF-05 NSC-05

NSCE-00 SP-02 PM-03 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PRS-01

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R 061039Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3026

INFO CINCPAC

CINCPACREPPHIL SUBIC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 5977

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, RP

SUBJECT: CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN PHILIPPINES

SUMMARY: PHILIPPINE HANDLING OF REFUGEE INFLUX HAS BEGUN TO SETTLE DOWN. ALTHOUGH STILL HARD LINE TOWARDS VIETNAMESE, OVER 60,000 REFUGEES HAVE PASSED THROUGH HERE SINCE EVACUATION BEGAN. WE THINK HYSTERIA THAT CHARACTERIZED GOP BEHAVIOR PROMPTED BY PANIC AT FALL OF INDOCHINA, BY CONCERN THAT US MIGHT SO SWAMP PHILIPPINES WITH REFUGEES IT MIGHT LOSE OPPORTUNITY TO ADJUST TO NEW REGIONAL POWER REALITIES, AND BY HEIGHTENED SENSE OF U.S. WEAKNESS. ROMULO'S OWN FEEBLE AND UNGENEROUS LEADERSHIP ALSO MADE ITSELF FELT. NOW THAT MARCOS HAS BEGUN TO ASSERT LEADERSHIP OVER ISSUE, IT HAS BEGUN LOSE ITS SENSE OF CRISIS. END SUMMARY.

1. RATHER RAGGED AND BRISTLY PHILIPPINE HANDLING OF REFUGEE INFLUX APPEARS TO BE SETTLING DOWN INTO SMOOTHER AND GENERALLY MORE COOPERATIVE PATTERNS. PHILIPPINES MAINTAINS INITIAL HARD LINE ATTITUDE ON TAKING OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES  
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BUT IT HAS CEASED DECLAMATORY HARASSMENT IN MEDIA OF SUCH

TRANSIENT VIETNAMESE AS NGUYEN CAO KY; IT HAS CLAMPED DOWN ON LOOSE MEDIA TALK ABOUT CONFRONTATION ON TRANSITING OF VIETNAMESE MILITARY AND POLITICAL FIGURES WHOM GOP PREFERRED NOT TO COME THROUGH THE PHILIPPINES; AND IT HAS AGREED TO TAKE COMMON LAW DEPENDENTS OF FILIPINOS NOW AT CLARK. PHILIPPINE POSITION STILL DOES NOT APPROXIMATE REPUTATION FOR HOSPITALITY SO CAREFULLY CULTIVATED BY TOURISM SECRETARY BUT FACT REMAINS THAT OVER 60,000 VIETNAMESE AND OTHER REFUGEES HAVE BEEN PROCESSED THROUGH CLARK AND SUBIC SINCE EVACUATION BEGAN.

2. HANDLING OF REFUGEES OF ALL NATIONALITIES BY PHILIPPINE MILITARY LIAISON OFFICERS AT BASES AND BY SPECIAL IMMIGRATION TEAMS SENT TO BASES WAS NOT VERY SMOOTH AT THE OUTSET. SENSITIVE TO WHAT THEY APPARENTLY FELT WAS THE NEED TO UPHOLD PHILIPPINE SOVEREIGNTY, FILIPINO OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN OVER ASSERTIVE AND UNCOOPERATIVE. UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE PHILIPPINES, THIS INITIAL APPROACH WAS NOT LOST ON AMERICAN AND THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS BEING PROCESSED THROUGH SUBIC, AND DURING PRESS OF BUSINESS MAY 3, PHILIPPINE IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS MANAGED TO AFFRONT DIPLOMATS FROM A NUMBER OF THIRD COUNTRIES INCLUDING IRANIAN AMBASSADOR WHOSE PASSPORT THEY ANNOTATED WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO LEAVE PHILIPPINES ON FIRST FLIGHT. PATRIOTIC STANCE OF PHILIPPINE IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS WAS PRESUMABLY INSPIRED BY DFA SECRETARY ROMULO BUT HAS SINCE BEEN GREATLY TONED DOWN AS OTHER GOP OFFICIALS RECOGNIZED DAMAGING REPERCUSSIONS. LAST BATCH OF THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS, INCLUDING AMERICANS PROCESSED MAY 5, CAME THROUGH RAPIDLY AND WITHOUT ANY SIGNIFICANT DIFFICULTY.

3. COMMENT: EXTRAORDINARILY GAUCHE AND OCCASIONALLY OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOR OF SOME PHILIPPINE OFFICIALS IN HANDLING VAST INFLUX OF REFUGEES HAS UNDERSTANDABLY GENERATED A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF DISMAY OVER THE CONDUCT OF OUR CLOSE FRIENDS AND ALLIES. EXTRAORDINARY BEHAVIOR OF PHILIPPINES IS PERHAPS NOT FULLY EXPLAINABLE BUT WE THINK A NUMBER OF FACTORS CONTRIBUTED TO IT. THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR, PRESUMABLY, IS SENSE OF PANIC CREATED IN PHILIPPINES BY FALL OF INDOCHINA AND INTRODUCTION OF DUNKIRK-LIKE SYNDROME  
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INTO PHILIPPINES BY MASS EVACUATION OF AMERICAN AS WELL AS VIETNAMESE THROUGH PHILIPPINES. CONCOMITANTLY THE PHILIPPINES BECAME CONCERNED ABOUT NEED TO PRESERVE ITS IMAGE AS UNENCUMBERED ASEAN MEMBER FROM BEING SWAMPED BY REFUGEE INFLUX SO THAT IT COULD TAKE APPROPRIATE STEPS TO ADJUST TO EMERGENCE OF NEW POWER ON THE REGIONAL SCENE. AS WASHINGTON KNOWS, PHILIPPINES IS EXTREMELY SENSITIVE TO POWER BALANCES IN THE AREA AND THIS ISSUE HAS ASSUMED

GREAT PROMINENCE IN PHILIPPINES BECAUSE OF CURRENT PERCEPTION OF REDUCED EFFICACY OF U.S. COMMITMENT TO PHILIPPINES.

4. WHILE ALL THE FACTORS NOTED ABOVE UNDOUBTEDLY BEAR ON PHILIPPINE APPROACH TO EVACUATION THEY CANNOT OF COURSE EXPLAIN PHILIPPINE GENIUS FOR SELF DESTRUCTION. TRADITIONAL SHORT SIGHTEDNESS OF FILIPINOS NO DOUBT HEIGHTENED IN CRISIS-LIKE ATMOSPHERE AND EXACERBATED BY ILL-CONSIDERED DIRECTIONS FROM PHILIPPINE IMMIGRATION. ALTHOUGH THERE IS SOME REASON TO BELIEVE THAT SOME GOP OFFICIALS MAY HAVE SOUGHT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF INDOCHINA EVACUATION TO ADVANCE PHILIPPINE RELATIONS WITH THIRD WORLD AND COMMUNIST COUNTRIES AND THAT ROMULO MAY HIMSELF HAVE BEEN INTRIGUED BY APPARENT REALISM OF "SUCH A POWER ADJUSTMENT," WE THINK MUCH OF THE EXPLANATION MAY SIMPLY BE DUE TO FACT THAT THE GENERAL IS FADING (OR AS IMELDA QUIPPED TO AMBASSADOR TODAY, "IN A CRISIS, ROMULO BECOMES THE CRISIS."). PHILIPPINE TEAM WITH ROMULO AS MEMBER HAS OBVIOUSLY NOT EXCELLED IN THIS CRITICAL MOMENT BUT IT IS WORTH RECALLING THAT REACTION OF TEAM AS A WHOLE IS TYPICAL OF WHAT ONE MAY EXPECT FROM THE PHILIPPINES DRIVEN BY SENSE OF CRISIS AND TEAM HAS ULTIMATELY HELPED MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES TO U.S.

5. IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME TO PUT TOGETHER HOW GOP ORGANIZED ITSELF TO HANDLE EVACUATION CRISIS AND SAME TIME TO FORGET SIGHT OF PRESIDENT STEAMING OUT INTO BAY ON HIS YACHT AS FIRST BIG WAVE OF EVACUEES HIT SUBIC. BUT IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY APPARENT THAT HE PLAYED LITTLE IF ANY ROLE AT OUTSET. HE IS VERY CLEARLY AND AUTHENTICALLY MOVING INTO PICTURE NOW, PICKING UP THE PIECES AND RESTORING SOME SEMBLANCE OF ORDER IN PHILIPPINE MANAGEMENT OF PROBLEM.

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## Message Attributes

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**To:** STATE  
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